

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 00564 091342Z

44

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

/057 W

----- 032806

R 091135Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6588

INFO COMUSMACTHAI

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 9037

CINCPAC HONOLULU

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0564

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV TH

SUBJECT: SIGNIFICANCE OF THAI CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: BANGKOK 0487

SUMMARY: THAI CABINET RESHUFFLE OF JAN 8 (REFTEL) HAS
PROBABLY PROVIDED SOME FURTHER
POLITICAL STRENGTH TO KHUKRIT
GOVERNMENT, BUT IT HAS FAILED TO BRING ANY OUTSTANDING
PERSONALITIES INTO CABINET. KHUKRIT IS BETTER ABLE TO
WITHSTAND VOTE OF CONFIDENCE EXPECTED TO BE RAISED BY
OPPOSITION NEXT WEEK. PRIME MINISTER'S SOCIAL ACTION PARTY
RETAINS CONTROL OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (AND THUS CONTROL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 00564 091342Z

OF ELECTIONS MACHINERY) AND POWERFUL MINISTRY OF FINANCE.

RESHUFFLE APPEARS TO SIGNIFY NO RPT NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES
OF RTG POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. THAI CABINET RESHUFFLE OF JAN 8 (REFTEL) HAS PROBABLY
PROVIDED SOME FURTHER POLITICAL STRENGTH TO KHUKRIT
GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH IT HAS FAILED TO BRING ANY OUTSTANDING
PERSONALITIES INTO CABINET. EVENTS OF NEXT WEEK,
WHICH WILL PROBABLY INVOLVE EXTRAORDINARY SESSIONS OF
PARLIAMENT WILL MOST LIKELY RESULT IN GOVERNMENT VICTORY ON
MOTION OF CONFIDENCE, THOUGH MARGIN OF VICTORY
STILL NOT RPT NOT CLEAR.

2. VOTING STRENGTH OF KHUKRIT CABINET IN PARLIAMENT HAS
ALWAYS BEEN UNCERTAIN, GIVEN LAX THAI VOTING DISCIPLINE.
WHEN IT WAS CONFIRMED IN OFFICE BY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON MARCH 20, 1975, KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT RECEIVED 140 VOTES,
WHILE OPPOSITION RECEIVED 124 VOTES. THERE WERE FIVE
ABSTENTIONS, EVIDENTLY DELIBERATE. WHEN BUDGET PASSED
ON OCT. 10, 1975, GOVERNMENT HAS 139 VOTES, COMPARED TO
100 VOTES FOR OPPOSITION. SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY (18 VOTES)
ABSTAINED, EVIDENTLY FOLLOWING ARRANGEMENT WITH KHUKRIT,
REMAINING 12 VOTES WERE COMBINATION OF ABSTENTIONS BY
MINOR PARTIES AND ABSENCES. CABINET RESHUFFLE ANNOUNCED
JAN. 8 HAS APPARENTLY ADDED 10 SOCIAL AGRARIA VOTES TO
KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT TOTAL, BUT ABOUT SIX SOCIAL JUSTICE
MP'S, DISSATISFIED WITH DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS, MAY VOTE
WITH OPPOSITION IN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE NEXT WEEK.
KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT MAY PICK UP ONE OR TWO VOTES IN
ADDITION TO ABOVE CALCULATION, AND EMBASSY BELIEVES HE
FIGURES TO HAVE SUPPORT OF ABOUT 145 MP'S. IN THIS
LIMITED SENSE KHUKRIT HAS IMPROVED HIS POSITION AS
RESULT OF CABINET RESHUFFLE.

3. YAI SAWITCHAT, MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CO-FOUNDER OF
KHUKRIT'S OWN PARTY, HAD TO BE DROPPED BECAUSE OF HIS
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. HE WAS RECENTLY DECLARED BANKRUPT
BY A COURT BUT IS APPEALING THE VERDICT. THAWIT KLINPRATHUM,
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES AND LEADER OF
THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP) WAS GIVEN THE POST OF
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, PARTLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 00564 091342Z

POSITION AS LEADER OF THE LARGEST PARTNER IN THE
COALITION AND PARTLY TO COMPENSATE FOR THE FACT THAT
THE SJP DID NOT PICK UP ANY ADDITIONAL POSTS AS IT HAS
LONG DEMANDED. ANOTHER SOP TO THAWIT WAS THE OUSTER
OF ANAN PHAKPRAPHAI, THAI PARTY MJP AND DEPUTY MINISTER
OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES, WHO HAD BITTERLY
CRITICIZED THAWIT PUBLICLY. BUNTHENG THONGSAWAT WAS
NAMED MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ALSO MADE A DEPUTY PRIME

MINISTER, PROBABLY TO SAVE HIS FACE FOR HAVING LOST THE POWERFUL INTERIOR PORTFOLIO.

4. HOWEVER, CHANGE IS FAR FROM MAJOR REARRANGEMENT OF PARTIES WHICH KHUKRIT HAS LONG ADVOCATED. AS BIOS OF NEW MEMBERS OF CABINET (SUBMITTED IN SEPTEL) MAKE CLEAR, NONE OF THEM APPEARS TO ADD MUCH TO QUALITY OF NEW CABINET. IN CASE OF PRATHUANG KHAMPRAKOP (SOCIAL AGRARIAN PARTY, NEW DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS), EW INCUMBENT SEEMS RELATIVELY UNQUALIFIED FOR JOB. TRAINED AS ENGINEER, HE HAS HAD NO EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REPORTEDLY SPEAKS ONLY A LITTLE ENGLISH. NOT CLEAR HOW HE CAN PERFORM IN NEW POSITION. NEWLY-APPOINTED DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ANAN CHAISENG (PEACEFUL PEOPLE'S PARTY), SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION TO PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT JAN. 9, STATING THAT HE HAD INSUFFICIENT TRAINING AND WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PERFORM HIS DUTIES.

5. INITIAL PRESS REACTION TO CABINET RESHUFFLE HAS SHOWN AWARENESS OF KHUKRIT'S NEED TO REARRANGE MINISTERIAL TEAM. HOWEVER, BANGKOK POST NOTED EDITORIALY JAN. 9 THAT "....IT IS NOT AN IDEAL CABINET AND NOT EVEN A WIDELY ACCEPTABLE ONE. IT APPEARS TO BE THE RESULT OF POLITICAL DEALS TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE WEAKNESSES

ATHER THAN THE STRENGTHS OF THE RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PARTIES FORMING THE COALITION ... THE PRIME MINISTER WAS NOT ACTUALLY A FREE AGENT IN THE MATTER...." USIS WILL PREPARE MORE DETAILED ROUNDUP OF PRESS REACTION TO CABINET RESHUFFLE WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 00564 091342Z

6. COMMENT: KHUKRIT THUS HAS SLIGHTLY IMPROVED HIS POSITION BUT STILL HEADS AN UNWIELDY AND INHERENTLY UNSTABLE CABINET OF MIXED QUALITY. THE NEW LINEUP PROBABLY HELPS HIM TO DEAL WITH THE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT, BUT WILL PROBABLY NOT STRENGTHEN THE PRIME MINISTER'S HAND IN FACING UP TO THE BROAD RANGE OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THAILAND AT PRESENT. IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE, HOWEVER, THAT, ALTHOUGH THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY HAS TWO FEWER MEMBERS IN THE NEW CABINET, IT STILL CONTROLS THE POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT INTERIOR PORTFOLIO (AND THUS CONTROL OF THE ELECTION MACHINERY) AND THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT FINANCE MINISTRY, IN ADDITION TO THE POST OF PRIME MINISTER. AS A WHOLE THE RESHUFFLE APPEARS TO PORTEND NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES OF RTG POLICY. WHITEHOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, PARTY STRENGTH, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO00564
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760008-0516
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760173/aaaacmum.tel
Line Count: 169
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BANGKOK 487
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 MAY 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SIGNIFICANCE OF THAI CABINET RESHUFFLE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006